



Consultation, IA <consultation@bia.gov>

1076-AF18**Kelley Wheeler** <goldenhilltribe@gmail.com>

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To: consultation@bia.gov

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Sent via Email to: consultation@bia.gov

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Dear Officials of the Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs:

The Draft Rule issued by the BIA in 2013, was received by my tribe with much enthusiasm; we believed that FINALLY we were being given a level playing field, without political influence or the interference by others who had their own agendas. To our dismay, all of this changed upon the issuance of the Proposed Rule of 2014.

What happened! How did the Draft Rule of 2013 change from regulations that: (1) streamlined a process that for generations made it virtually impossible for petitions for federal recognition to even be reviewed; (2) eliminated requirements for tribes to provide documentation for a period of time that records no longer exist, never existed, or were destroyed; and (3) have throughout history been so plagued with outside interference, either political or otherwise, that have made Native Americans "victims."

What I am referring to is the issuance of the Proposed Rule of 2014, which requires that a tribe wishing to re-petition for federal recognition cannot do so with approval of a 3rd party individual or entity who fought against them. What is interesting is that this insertion in the Proposed Rule of 2014 was made only after legislators in Connecticut went to extreme measures to express that the Draft Rule of 2013 would practically guarantee the recognition of three of its State recognized tribes, resulting in what they consider devastating consequences for the State. (Please GOOGLE Connecticut leaders oppose proposed federal recognition rules.)

Just when the BIA seemed to be giving Native Americans a fair shot at federal recognition, the BIA seems to be letting Connecticut legislators in the back door to alter a federal rule so that tribes that Connecticut has had a relationship with since time immemorial will not be allowed to reapply. Historically:

The Golden Hill Paugussett Tribe has existed as a tribal entity in the region known today as the State of Connecticut since time immemorial. The status of the Golden Hill Paugussetts as an Indian tribe has been reaffirmed by the State of Connecticut on a continuous basis since the 17th Century through a myriad of social, political and legal relationships, culminating in numerous statutes, administrative actions and court decisions. Indicative of this historical tribal-state relationship, the Tribe knowingly maintains and exercises its inherent political authority over its members and its two State-designated, tax-free reservations. In further acknowledgment of this longstanding continuous recognition by the State of Connecticut, the legislature created

the Connecticut Indian Affairs Council which entitles the tribe to representation and duties respecting the governance of State recognized Connecticut Indians. The tribe is also represented on the Connecticut Native American Heritage Advisory Council, which has statutory duties for the preservation of Native American heritage in the State of Connecticut.

How can leaders in the State of Connecticut -- a State that has historically documented and protected its State recognized tribes, now take measures to fight against a federal ruling that will provide a means for the survival of its Native American people.

How can the BIA allow interference in its initiative to, “. . . put in place rules that are designed to ‘demonstrate the administration’s commitment to restoring tribal homelands and furthering economic development.’”

How can the BIA allow a group of people in Connecticut undo what can be a historical move by the Federal government that would eliminate many roadblocks to the survival of historical tribes.

I applaud the Assistant Secretary’s proposed rule changes to allow tribes to apply for another chance at federal recognition; however, I adamantly deplore the rule change that would allow third parties to block basically the three tribes in Connecticut (Golden Hill, Eastern Pequot and Schaghticoke) the ability to reapply for federal recognition. It is a major slap in the face to the three Connecticut tribes and as Chief of Golden Hill I find it deplorable and prejudicial. After years of dealing with this broken system filled with political influence and violations of due process, how can these people be allowed to block Golden Hill and the other two tribes from reapplying because of their own political agenda. To allow a national program of federal recognition to be subjected to political influence by one state (Connecticut), speaks nothing but the very political influence that these proposed regulations were suppose to stop.

It is my hope that the Assistant Secretary review this rule change, realize the inequity of this specific rule change and provide the same equal opportunity for tribes in all states.

Sincerely,

Chief Quiet Hawk

Chief Quiet Hawk

(Aurelius H. Piper, Jr.)

Hereditary Chief